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KNUCKLES

TM



GALA 25th ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

DIRECT EDITION

KNUCKLES

BOOK TWENTY-FIVE CHILDHOOD'S END

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BORN TO THE MOST NOBLE OF ECHIDNA HOUSES, THE LATEST TO CONTINUE THE FAMILY HERITAGE AND RESPONSIBILITY AS GUARDIAN OF THE FLOATING ISLAND, DEFENDER OF ALL AGAINST THE FORCES OF EVIL FROM THE WORLD BEYOND AS WELL AS THOSE WHO WOULD THREATEN FROM WITHIN!

**ARCHIE COMICS AND SEGA PRESENT...
KNUCKLES THE ECHIDNA!**

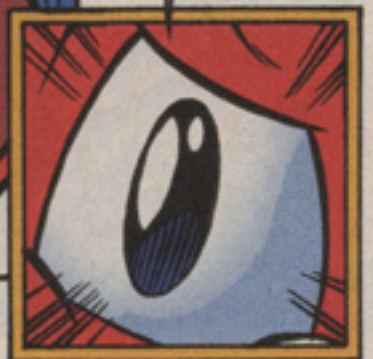
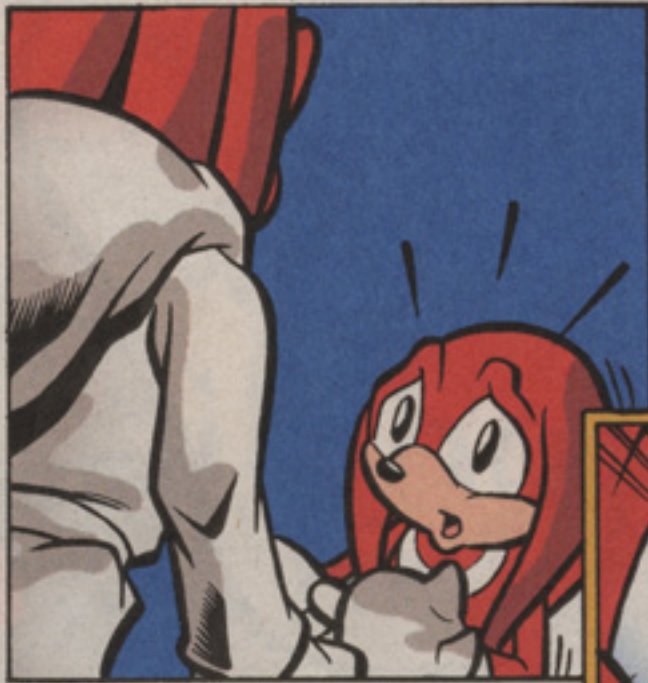
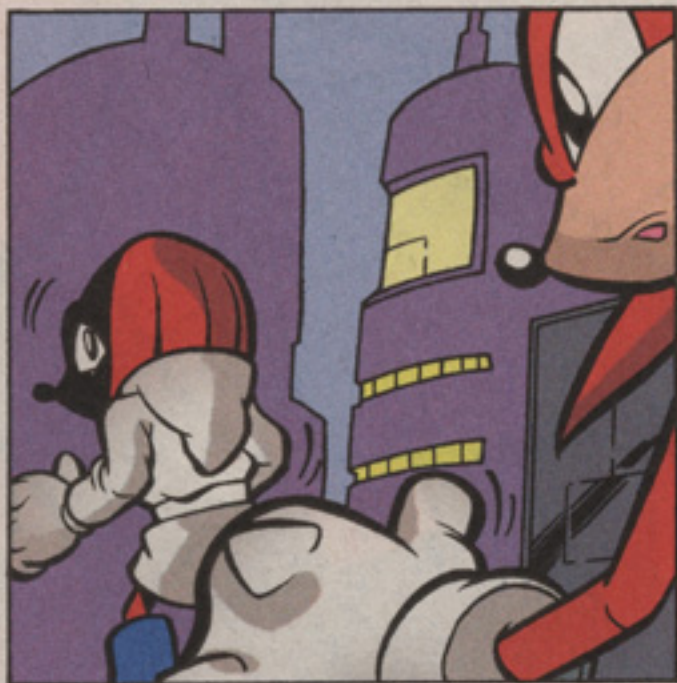
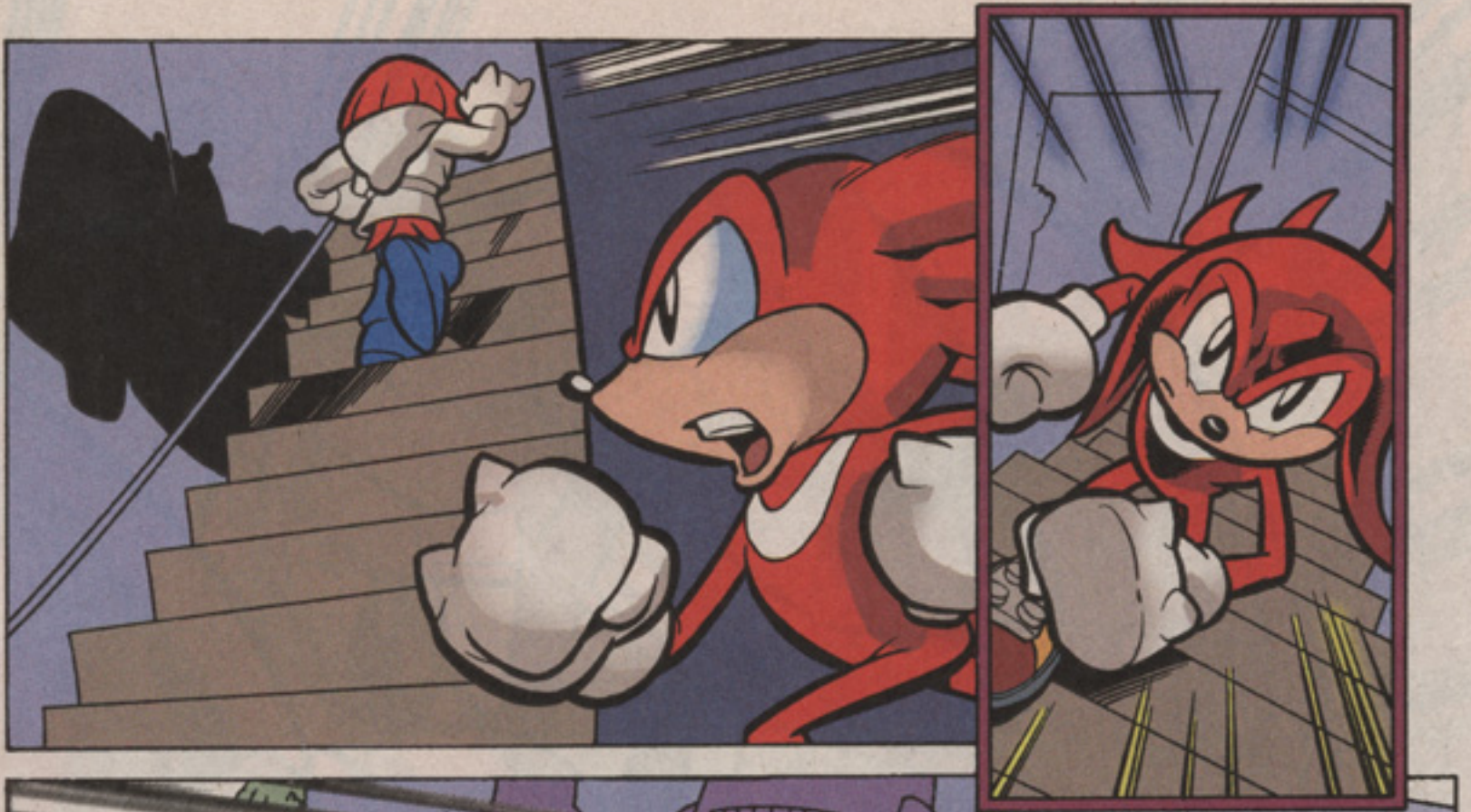


A LITTLE LESS THAN SIX YEARS AGO, **KNUCKLES** ACCOMPANIED HIS FATHER, **LOCKE**, TO THE EDGE OF THE **FORBIDDEN ZONE**, ONLY TO WITNESS HIS DISAPPEARANCE INTO A WALL OF UNEARTHLY FLAME.

FROM THAT POINT ON, **KNUCKLES** BELIEVED HIMSELF TO BE THE LAST OF HIS KIND... UNTIL RECENTLY.

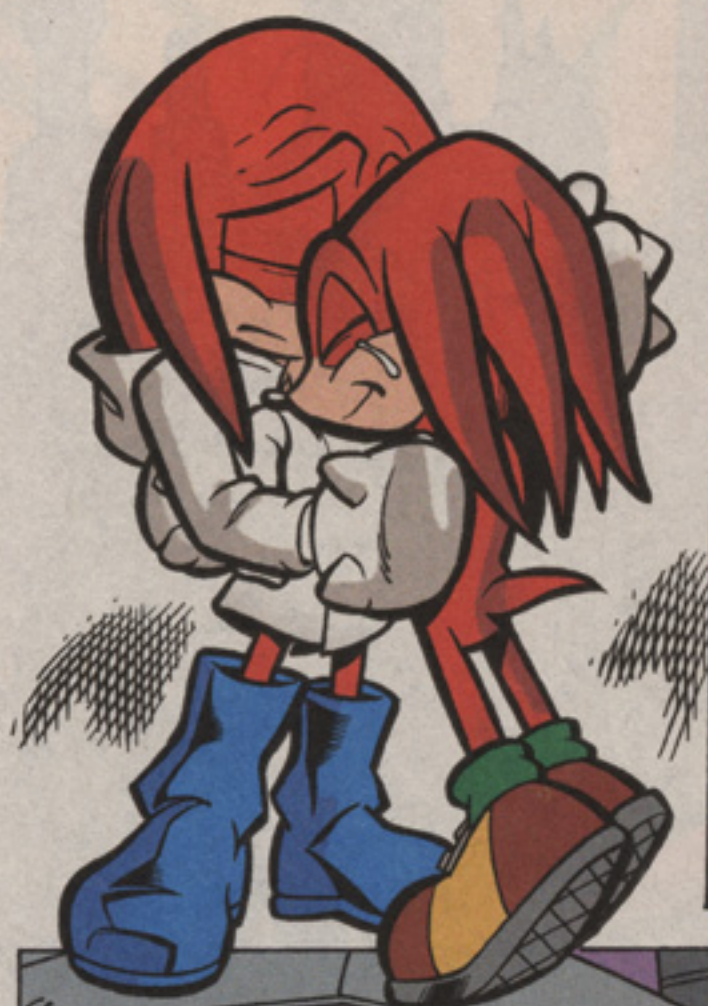
HAVING BEEN REUNITED WITH HIS PEOPLE, AMONG THEM HIS MOTHER, **LARA-LE**. THERE IS BUT ONE LAST LINK OF HIS PAST AWAITING TO BE RECLAIMED...













"JERK!"





--WE'RE
HEADING TO
HAVEN!



YOU'RE
GOING TO HAVE TO
EXPLAIN THAT
ONE TO ME!

I STILL
DON'T GET
IT!

WHAT
DO YOU WISH TO
KNOW, SON?

EVERYTHING!

I DIDN'T
GET FAR AFTER THE
INTRODUCTIONS
WERE MADE!*

* HE'S NOT KIDDING, EITHER.
SEE KNUCKLES # 21
AND # 22 FOR DETAILS--JUSTIN



THERE'S SO MUCH TO TELL
YOU, THAT I'M NOT CERTAIN
WHERE TO BEGIN, EITHER!

EXPLAIN
HAVEN,
EH?



HAVEN WAS DESIGNED
AND BUILT BY THE FIRE-ANTS
AS A FACILITY FOR YOUR ANCESTOR
STEPPENWOLF TO CARRY OUT
HIS DUTIES AS GUARDIAN OF
THE FLOATING ISLAND.

"OVER TIME, AND UNDER
STEPPENWOLF'S
GUIDANCE, IT WOULD
BECOME SOMETHING
MORE --MUCH MORE...

"...AS HIS SON MOONWATCHER GREW AND LEARNED, STEPPENWOLF GAVE MUCH THOUGHT TO THE FUTURE--

"--PLANNING FOR THE DAY WHEN HIS OWN OFFSPRING WOULD ASSUME THEIR DUTIES ALONGSIDE HIM..."

SO THEN ONE DAY IT HITS HIM--
BANG!--

--I'VE GOT TO START A SECRET SOCIETY, RIGHT?

HARDLY!

OVER TIME, IT BECAME QUITE EVIDENT THAT IF THE CHAOS EMERALD WERE TO BE PRESERVED, STEPPENWOLF WOULD ALSO HAVE TO BE VIGILANT OF THE WORLD BEYOND!

"WHEN THE FLOATING ISLAND WAS VISITED FOR THE FIRST TIME BY OVERLANDERS, STEPPENWOLF COULD SENSE THERE WAS MORE BEHIND THEIR WORDS..."

I AM KNOWN AS BRUTUS KINTOBOR OF THE HOUSE OF IVO.

MY COMPANIONS AND I COME IN PEACE!

GET READY TO SHOOT TO KILL!

"WHILE STEPPENWOLF WAS ALWAYS ONE TO GREET WITH OPEN ARMS--

"--HE WAS CERTAINLY *NOBODY'S FOOL*,
VERY MUCH IN *COMMAND* OF ANY GIVEN
SITUATION, AND THIS *PREPARED* FOR
ANY POSSIBLE *TREACHERY*..."

MY
BRAIN!!

IT FEELS LIKE
IT'S ON FIRE!!!

OH,
THE
PAIN!
THE
PAIN!!

STOP IT!

MAKE IT
STOP!!!

HAVE
MERCY!!

ON ONE
CONDITION!

ANYTHING! NAME
YOUR TERMS!!!

I'LL MAKE YOUR PAIN
STOP, AS LONG AS YOUR KIND
PROMISES *NEVER* TO
STEP FOOT ON THE FLOATING
ISLAND *EVER AGAIN*!

YOU *BREAK* YOUR OATH, AND I
PROMISE YOU AND YOURS WILL *RUE*
THE DAY THEY WERE BORN!

WE--*AGREE*!

BUT BEFORE WE
DEPART, THERE'S
ONE THING I WISH
TO KNOW--

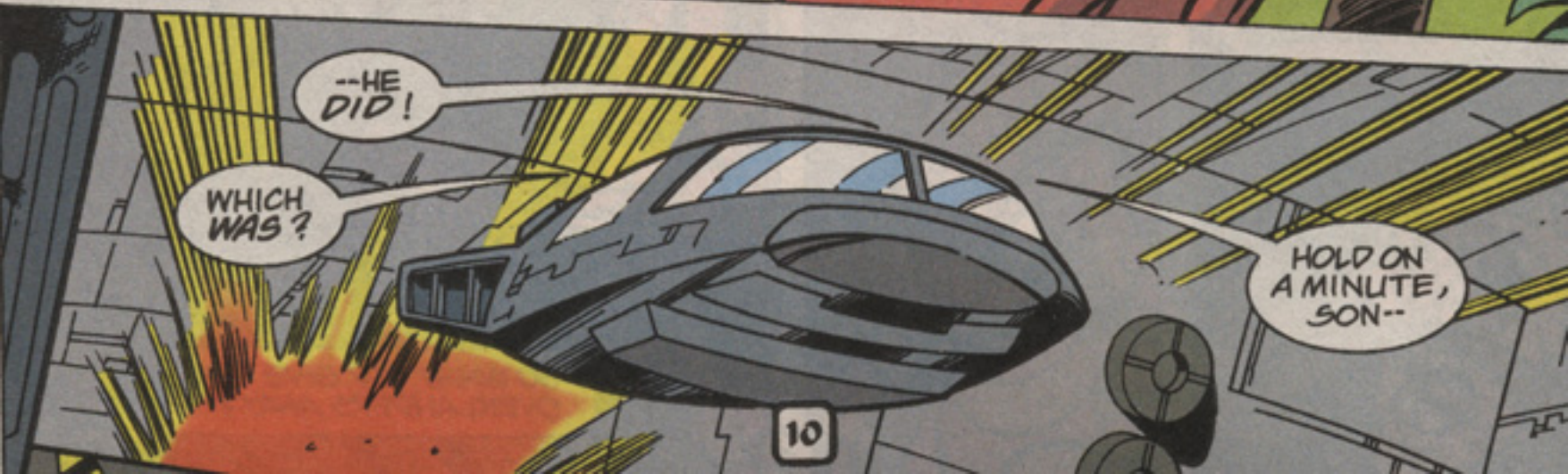
--HOW DID YOU
LEARN OF OUR
INTENTIONS?

THAT'S MY
SECRET!

WHO KNOWS
WHAT *ELSE* YOUR
KIND WILL TRY
NEXT?

NOW--
GO!

"SO WHAT DID GIVE THE
OVERLANDERS AWAY?"







--CHRISTOPHELES AND STEPPENWOLF DECIDED MORE THAN ONE GUARDIAN WOULD BE NECESSARY IN ORDER TO PROTECT THE FLOATING ISLAND AND ALL ITS INHABITANTS!

IT WAS THEN THAT STEPPENWOLF BROUGHT HIS SON, MOONWATCHER, TO HAVEN...

FATHER, WHAT IS THIS PLACE?



THIS IS WHERE YOU AND I WILL CONDUCT OPERATIONS FROM AS WE CARRY ON THE RESPONSIBILITIES ENTRUSTED TO US!



YOU HAVE WORKED HARD AND LEARNED WELL--AND I AM PROUD OF YOU, MOONWATCHER!

PROUD TO HAVE YOU AT MY SIDE!

AND NOW TO THE TASK AT HAND--



--AS WE FACE DANGERS FROM BEYOND AS WELL AS WITHIN!

IS THIS HOW IT WAS WITH YOU AND YOUR FATHER?

YOUR GRANDFATHER EDMUND NEVER COMPREHENDED THE CHALLENGES AHEAD--

--WHICH IS WHY I'M OFF TO RECONNOITER THE LAND MASS WE'RE ABOUT TO PASS OVER!

WHILE I ASCERTAIN THE LEVEL OF POTENTIAL JEOPARDY--





-IT WILL FALL ONTO YOU TO **ENSURE** THE **SECURITY** OF THE EMERALD, THIS ISLAND AND **ALL** WHO DWELL UPON IT!

I WILL NOT LET YOU DOWN, FATHER!



FOR A WHILE, STEPPENWOLF AND MOONWATCHER WOULD **TRADE-OFF** DUTIES--

--ALLOWING MOONWATCHER TO **INTERACT** WITH THE INHABITANTS OF **MOBIUS PRIME** AS WELL!

HOW COME YOU **NEVER** DID THAT WITH ME, DAD?

I'M GETTING TO THAT, SON!



"THE ARRANGEMENT WORKED WELL FOR **DECADES**, AS MOONWATCHER'S SON, **HARLAN**, JOINED IN WHEN HE CAME OF AGE--



"--AS DID **HARLAN'S** SON, **REMBRANDT**! IN FACT, IT WAS **REMBRANDT** WHO **CHRISTENED** US 'THE **BROTHERHOOD**!' "

"FOR A TIME, ALL WAS **WELL**--



COMING



SOON!

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2. Open to legal residents of the 50 U.S. states and D.C. Employees of Universal Studios, Nabisco, Inc., their affiliates, subsidiaries, agencies, retailers, and the immediate families of each and persons living in the household of each are not eligible. Void where prohibited. Limit 1 prize per calendar month per phone # (phone from which call was placed). Limit 1 Grand Prize per household, address or family. All federal, state and local laws and regulations apply. Winners are subject to verification. Odds of winning depend on the number of eligible entries received. All prizes will be awarded.

3. Grand Prizes will be awarded at end of program in random drawing from among all eligible, completed calls received. Please note that calling several times per day will not allow you to be entered into the drawing more than once per day—only one call per day from any given phone number will be entered into the Grand Prize drawing! Drawing conducted on or about 8/31/99. First Prize Winners will be selected via random intercepts of calls during program period, will be notified that they have won during call, & will be notified by mail within 6-8 weeks of winning call. Grand Prize Winners will be notified by mail on or about 9/15/99. Random intercepts, drawings & notification are under supervision of Carlson Draddy & Associates, an independent judging organization whose decisions are final.

4. Twenty-five (25) Grand Prizes—A 6-day/5-night trip for Winner and three (3) guests to Orlando, FL, including round-trip coach air travel from major gateway city nearest to Winner's home, hotel accommodations (1 room for 4), airport transfers, 5-day free admission to Universal Studios Escape and Islands of Adventure, plus \$1,000 spending money. All meals, ground transportation, taxes and any other expenses not specified above are the sole responsibility of the Winner. All travel must begin and end at major gateway city nearest to Winner's home. Approximate retail value (ARV): \$5,900. One Hundred Thousand (100,000) First Prizes—one (1) color-change dinosaur cup. ARV: \$5.50. If under 18, one of Grand Prize Winner's guests must be Winner's parent or legal guardian. Grand Prize Winners will be required to execute and return Affidavits of Eligibility and Publicity/Liability Releases, within 14 days of attempted notification. Grand Prize Winners' parents/legal guardians and all travel companions will be required to execute and return Publicity/Liability Releases within same time period. By participating in this Sweepstakes, entrants agree to be bound by these Official Rules and the decisions of the judges. By acceptance of Prize, Winners consent to Sponsor's use of their names and/or likenesses and biographical information for commercial purposes without additional notification or compensation, except where prohibited. Prizes are not transferable or assignable. No substitution of prizes is allowed, except at Sponsor's sole discretion. Grand Prize trip must be taken by April 30, 2000. If Grand Prize Winners and their guests are not available within the time specified, an alternate Winner may be chosen. Travel dates subject to Sponsor's approval and potential black-out dates and restrictions. All guests of Grand Prize Winner must travel with the Grand Prize Winner. Winners agree to release, discharge and hold harmless Nabisco, Inc., its affiliates, parents, subsidiaries, advertising and promotion agencies, and their employees, from any and all claims or damages, including personal injury and/or death arising out of Winners' participation in the Sweepstakes and in the acceptance and use and/or misuse of any of the prizes awarded therefrom.

5. For a list of Grand Prize Winners, available after December 31, 1999, or for a copy of these Official Rules, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to: Nabisco Islands of Adventure Winners, P.O. Box 3700, Dept. R, St. Cloud, MN 56397-3700, by February 1, 2000. Please indicate your request on outer envelope (Winners List or Official Rules).

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"--UNTIL REMBRANDT'S SON AARON, ON HIS THIRD TIME UPON MOBIUS PRIME, ENCOUNTERED A SQUADRON OF OVERLANDERS WANDERING THROUGH A FOREST..."

LOOK! AN ECHIDNA!



ONE OF YOURS?



HARDLY!

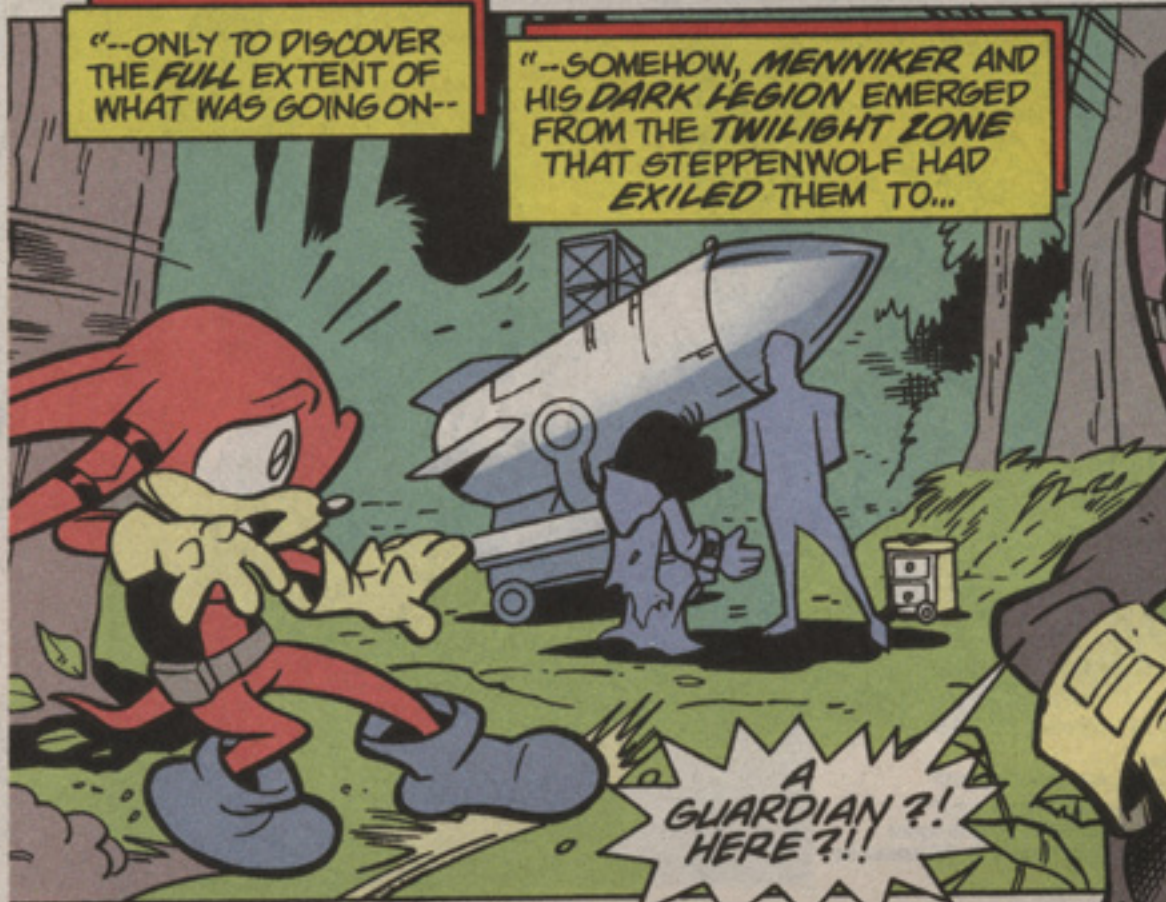
SEIZE HIM!

"STILL YOUNG AND RELATIVELY INEXPERIENCED, AARON WISELY RAN FOR HIS LIFE--"



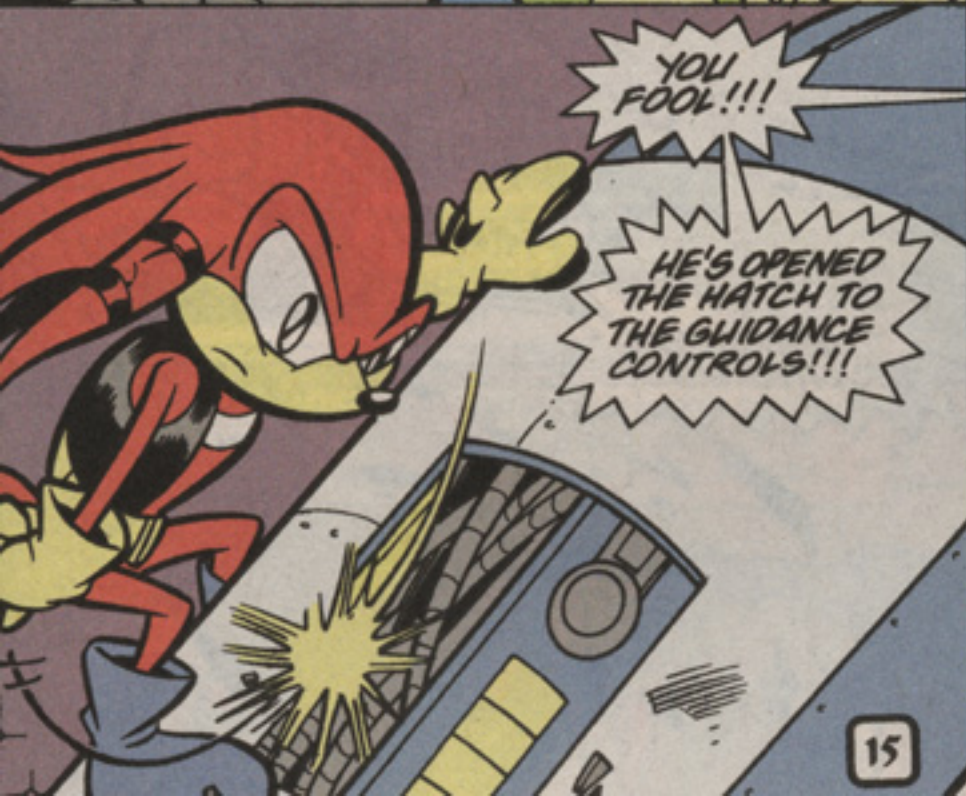
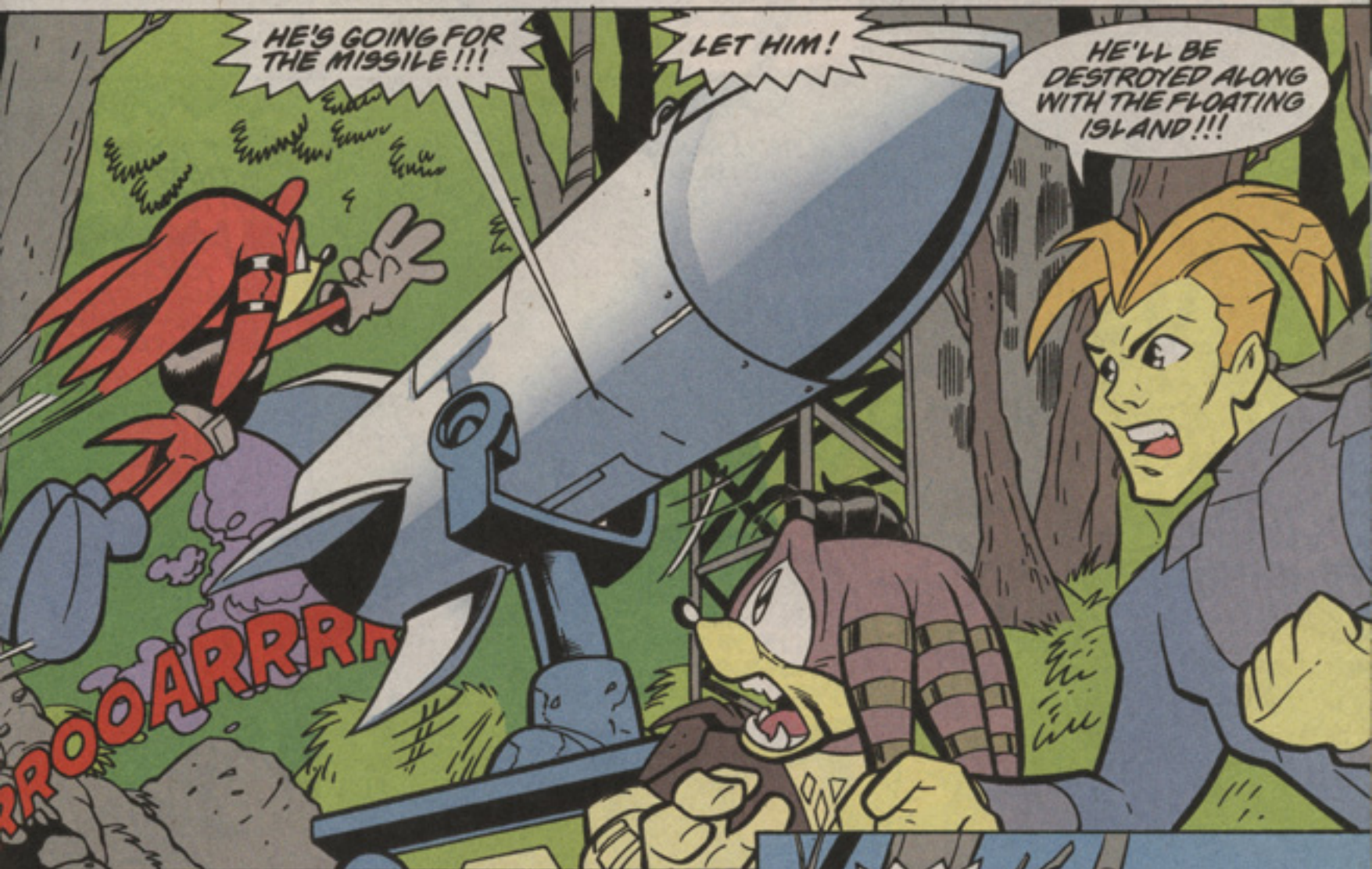
"--ONLY TO DISCOVER THE FULL EXTENT OF WHAT WAS GOING ON--"

"--SOMEHOW, MENNIKER AND HIS DARK LEGION EMERGED FROM THE TWILIGHT ZONE THAT STEPPENWOLF HAD EXILED THEM TO..."



A GUARDIAN?! HERE?!!





THIS IS EXACTLY
LIKE THE SYSTEMS
GRANDFATHER HAD
SHOWN ME!

NOW IF I
CROSS-CIRCUIT
TO 'B', I SHOULD
BE ABLE TO--

WHOOOPS!

GET OFF OF
THERE!!!

YOU MAKE
ME, BLUB!

I'VE GOT--
MORE IMPORTANT--
THINGS--TO DO!

DON'T TOUCH
THAT
SWITCH!!!

YOU'LL
PREMATURELY
SET OFF THE
DETONATOR!!

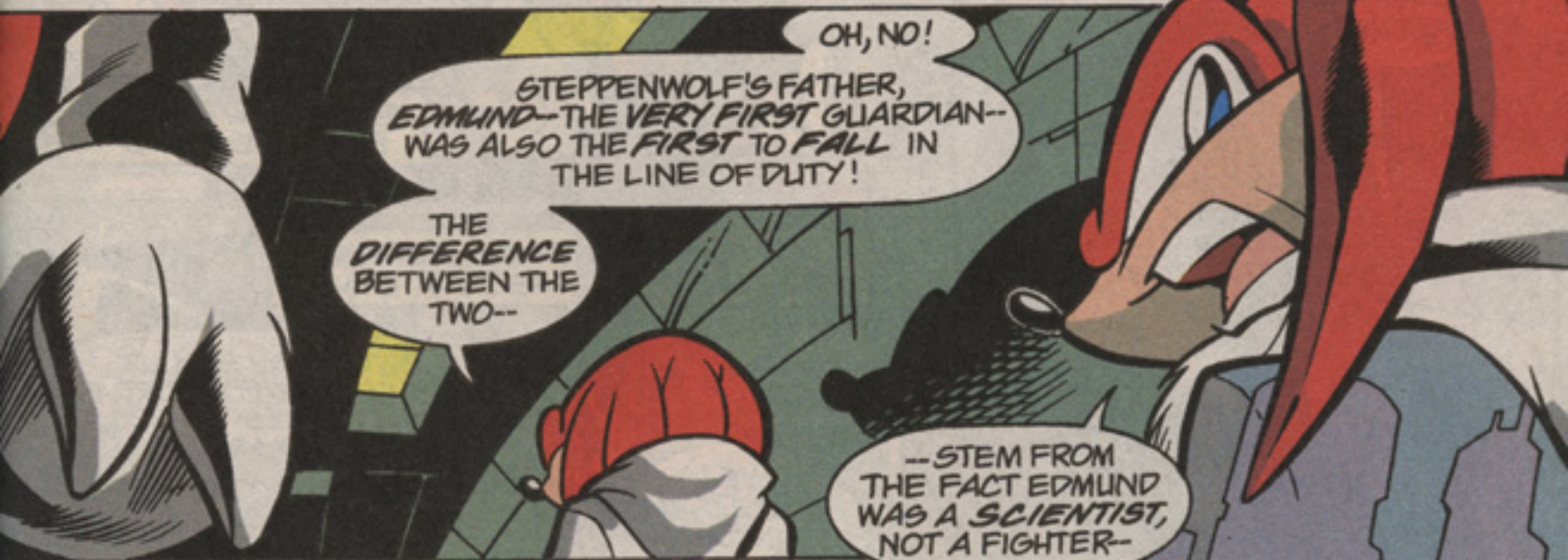
REALLY?!

THANKS FOR
TELLING ME!!!



THEY NEVER
DID FIND ANY TRACE
OF AARON OR
MENNIKER!

SO HE
WAS THE FIRST
GUARDIAN TO
DIE!



OH, NO!

STEPPENWOLF'S FATHER,
EDMUND--THE VERY FIRST GUARDIAN--
WAS ALSO THE FIRST TO FALL IN
THE LINE OF DUTY!

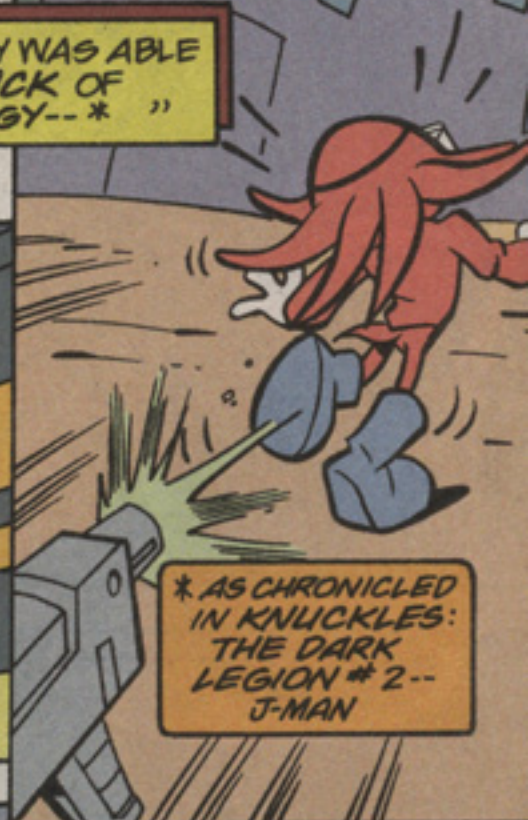
THE
DIFFERENCE
BETWEEN THE
TWO--

--STEM FROM
THE FACT EDMUND
WAS A SCIENTIST,
NOT A FIGHTER--

"--THUS, THE ENEMY WAS ABLE
TO EXPLOIT HIS LACK OF
COMBAT STRATEGY-- * "



--WHEREAS AARON, THOUGH GIFTED
WITH EXTRAORDINARY INTELLIGENCE,
SUCCEMBED TO THE BRAVADO AND
RECKLESSNESS OF HIS YOUTH!



* AS CHRONICLED
IN KNUCKLES:
THE DARK
LEGION # 2--
J-MAN

"THOUGH REMBRANDT SUFFERED THE
MOST, THE OTHER GUARDIANS WERE
JUST AS AGGRIEVED --

"-- AND DETERMINED TO TAKE
STEPS TO ENSURE THIS
WOULDN'T HAPPEN AGAIN..."



"--ESPECIALLY WHEN
AARON'S YOUNGER
BROTHER, JORDAN,
MADE IT KNOWN HE
WANTED TO CARRY
ON IN HIS
BROTHER'S STEAD."

FATHER--

--I WANT MORE
THAN ANYTHING TO
BECOME THE GUARDIAN
THAT AARON CAN NEVER
BE!

"REMBRANDT CHOKED
BACK THE TEARS--

"--AND BEGAN TUTORING JORDAN IN
A MANNER MUCH AS I DID YOU..."

THIS ISN'T
RIGHT!

WE
SHOULD ALL
BE INVOLVED
IN JORDAN'S
TRAINING!

BETTER WE SHOULD
ESTABLISH LIMITS FOR JORDAN AND
INCREASE HIS RESPONSIBILITIES
GRADUALLY!

SO YOU DIDN'T JUST
ABANDON ME?

HARDLY!

I WAS
ALWAYS
THERE FOR YOU,
KNUCKLES--

--BUT IN ORDER FOR
YOU TO LEARN SELF-
RELIANCE, I HAD TO
PROVIDE THE NECESSARY
ENVIRONMENT!

YOU
WOULDN'T
BE THE
INDIVIDUAL
YOU
ARE--



--IF YOU WEREN'T ALLOWED THE *OPPORTUNITY* TO *SUCCEED* OR *FAIL* ON YOUR OWN!

MORE THAN ANY OTHER DESCENDENT OF EDMUND THIS IS *ESPECIALLY* TRUE OF YOU!

ME?
WHY?

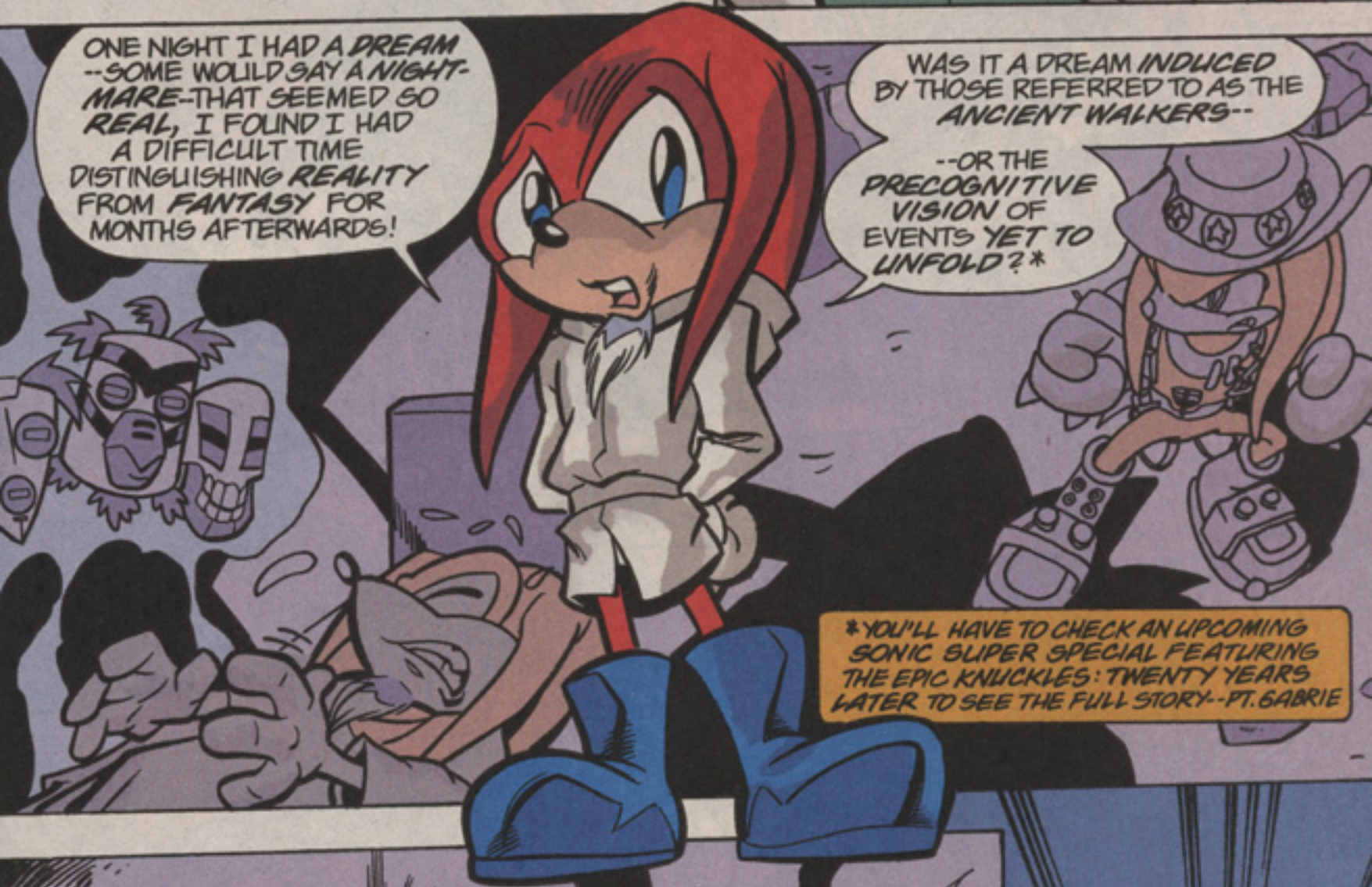


ARE YOU SURE YOU'RE *READY* FOR THIS?

ABSOLUTELY, FATHER!

YOU HAVE MY *UNDIVIDED* ATTENTION!

OKAAAYYY...

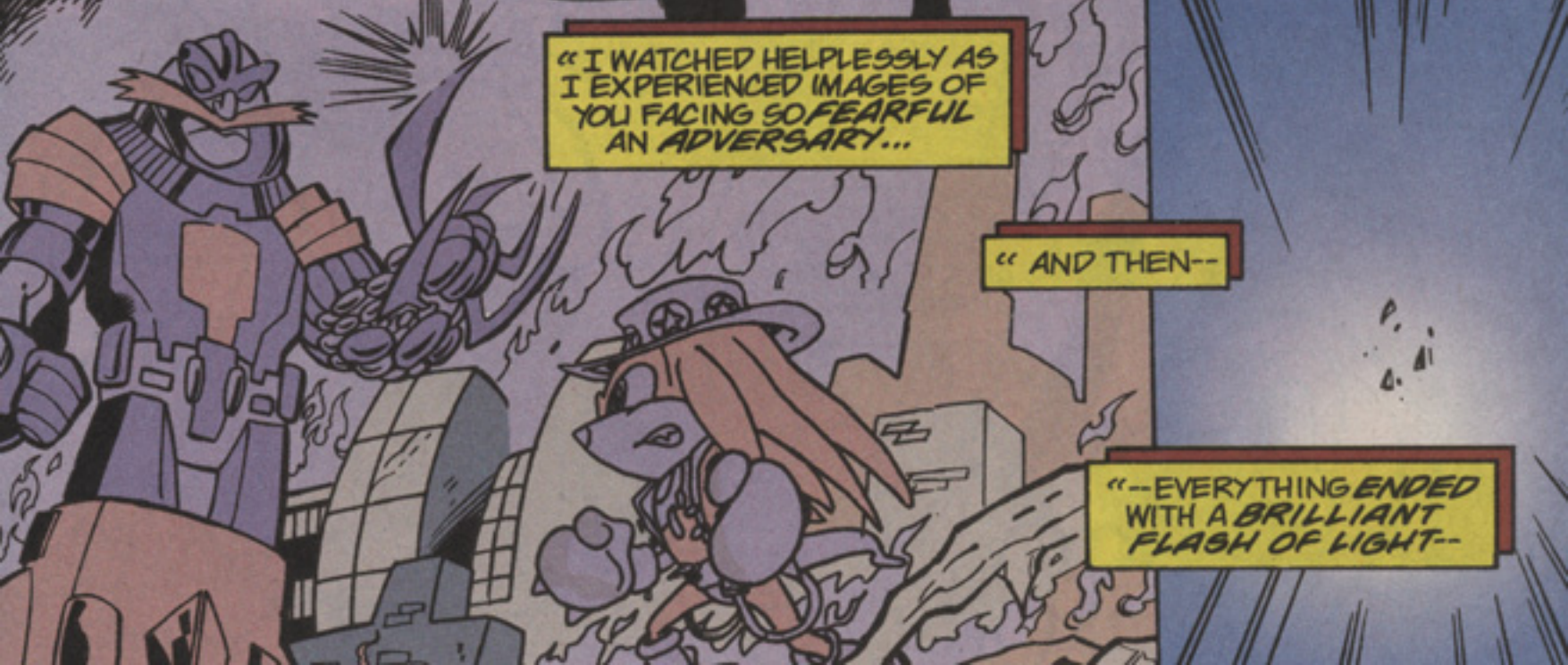


ONE NIGHT I HAD A *DREAM* --SOME WOULD SAY A *NIGHT-MARE*--THAT SEEMED SO *REAL*, I FOUND I HAD A DIFFICULT TIME DISTINGUISHING *REALITY* FROM *FANTASY* FOR MONTHS AFTERWARDS!

WAS IT A DREAM INDUCED BY THOSE REFERRED TO AS THE *ANCIENT WALKERS*--

--OR THE *PRECOGNITIVE* VISION OF EVENTS YET TO UNFOLD?*

*YOU'LL HAVE TO CHECK AN UPCOMING SONIC SUPER SPECIAL FEATURING THE EPIC KNUCKLES: TWENTY YEARS LATER TO SEE THE FULL STORY--PT. 6ABRIE



"I WATCHED HELPLESSLY AS I EXPERIENCED IMAGES OF YOU FACING SO FEARFUL AN ADVERSARY..."

"AND THEN--"

"--EVERYTHING ENDED WITH A BRILLIANT FLASH OF LIGHT--"



LOCKE?

WHAT IS IT,
HONEY?



ONLY A
DREAM,
LARA--

--YET
MORE THAN A
DREAM!



SO PERSISTENT
WERE THE VISIONS THAT
I SOUGHT OUT ADVICE
FROM A MOST UNLIKELY
SOURCE--

"--ATHAIR!"

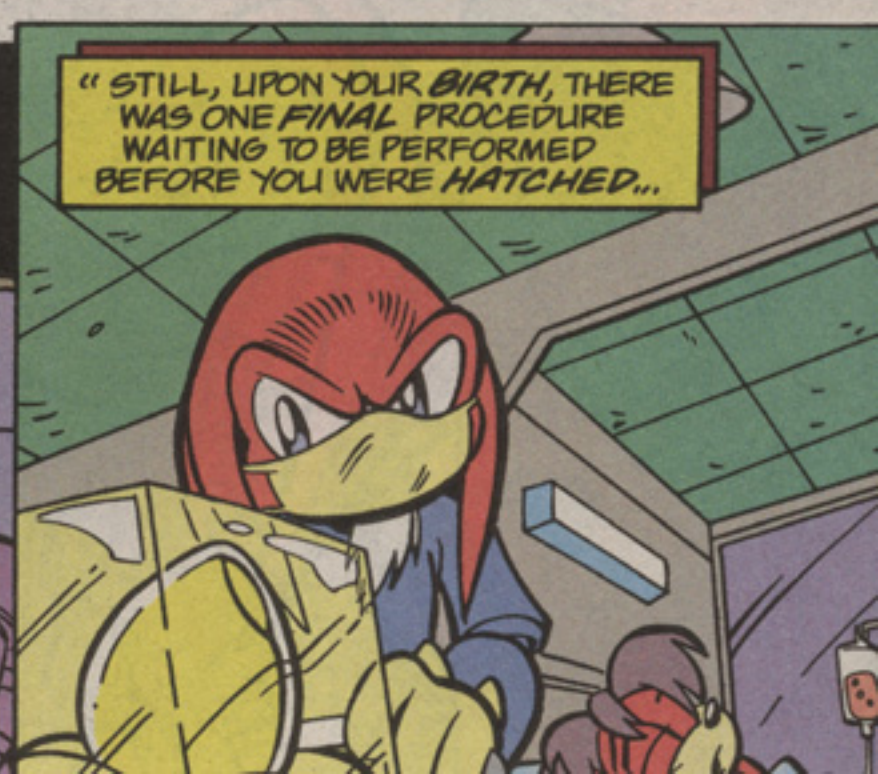
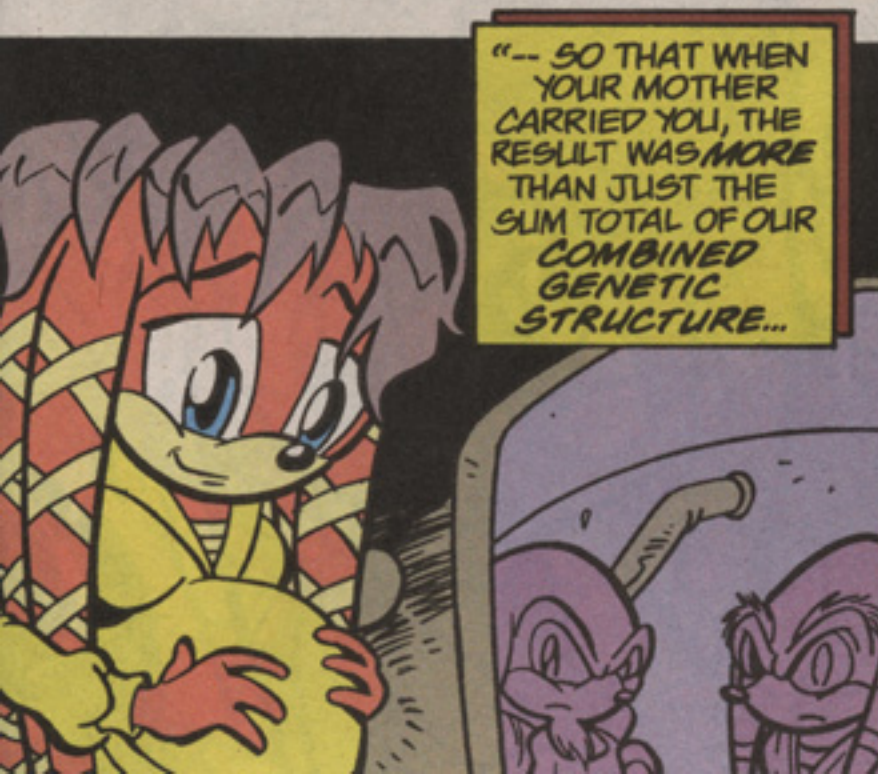
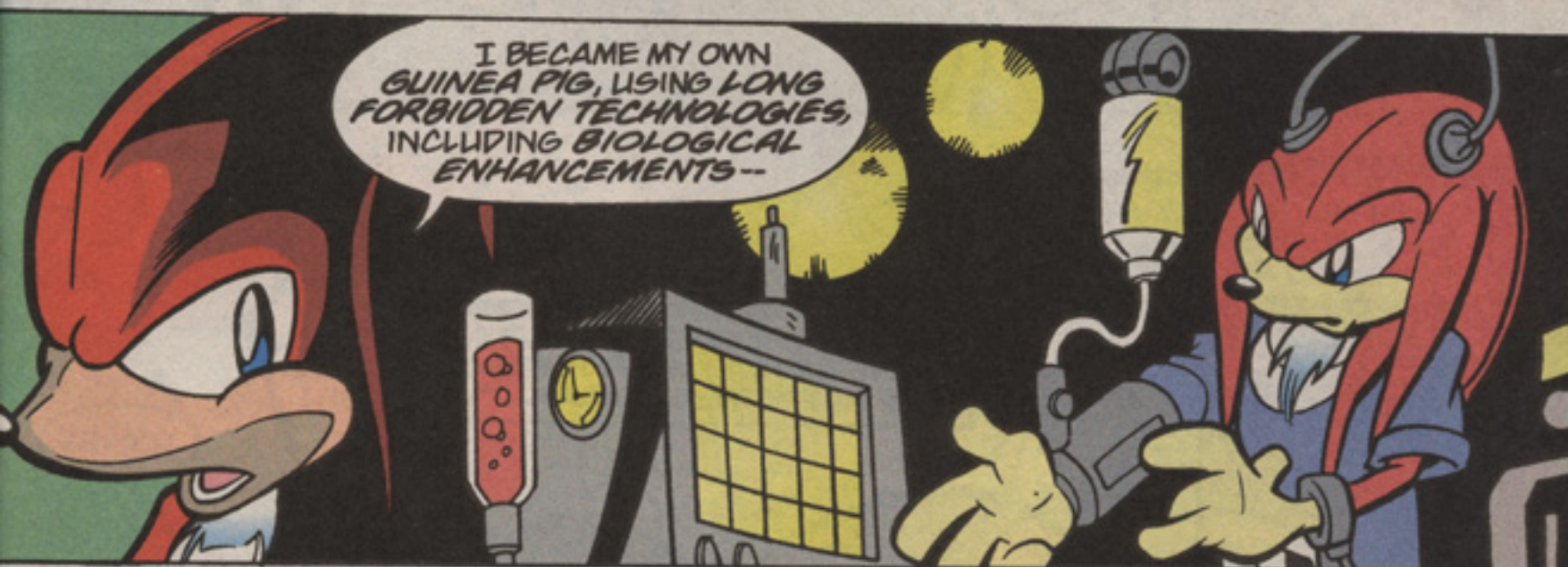
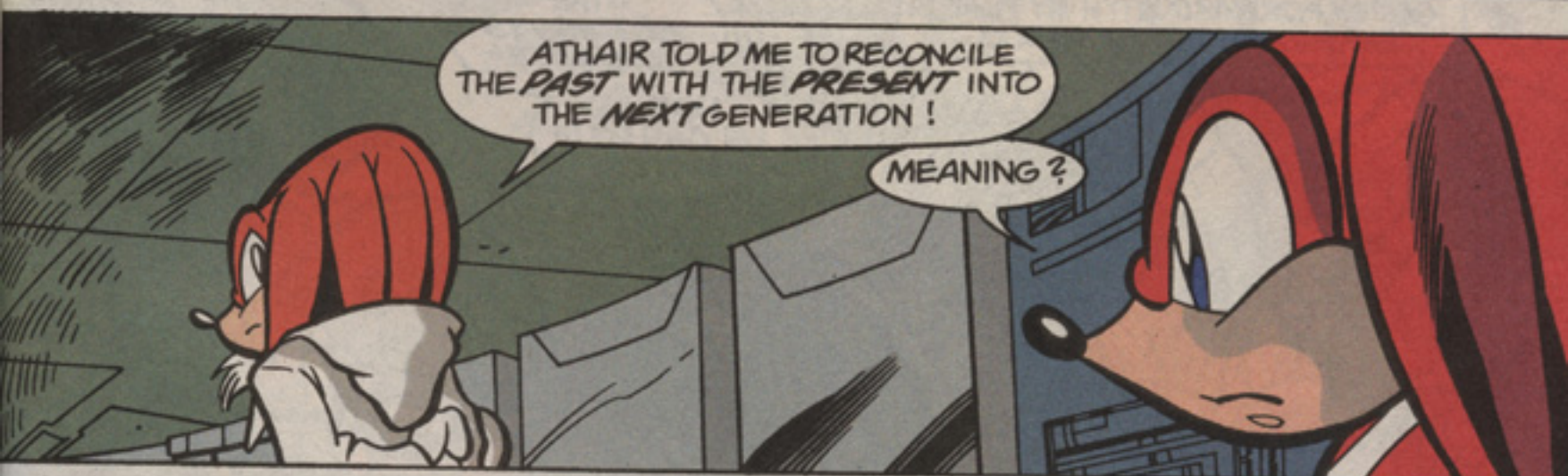
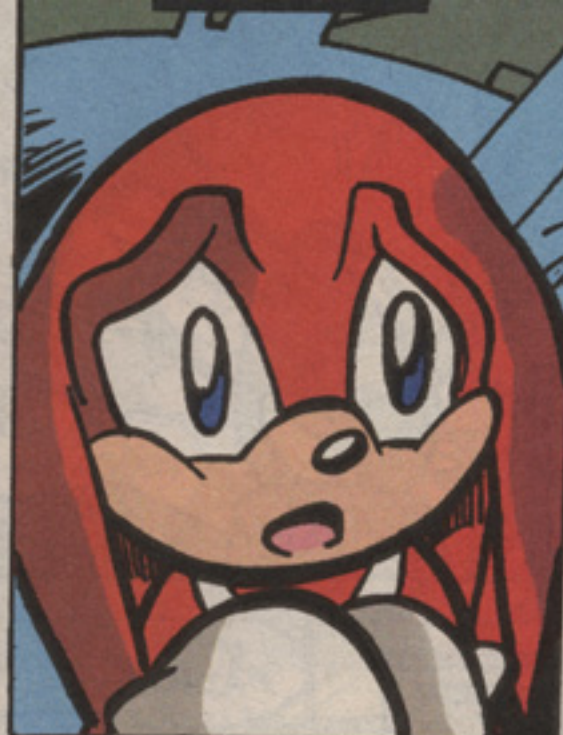
WHAT YOU
WITNESSED IS
THE FUTURE,
LOCKE--

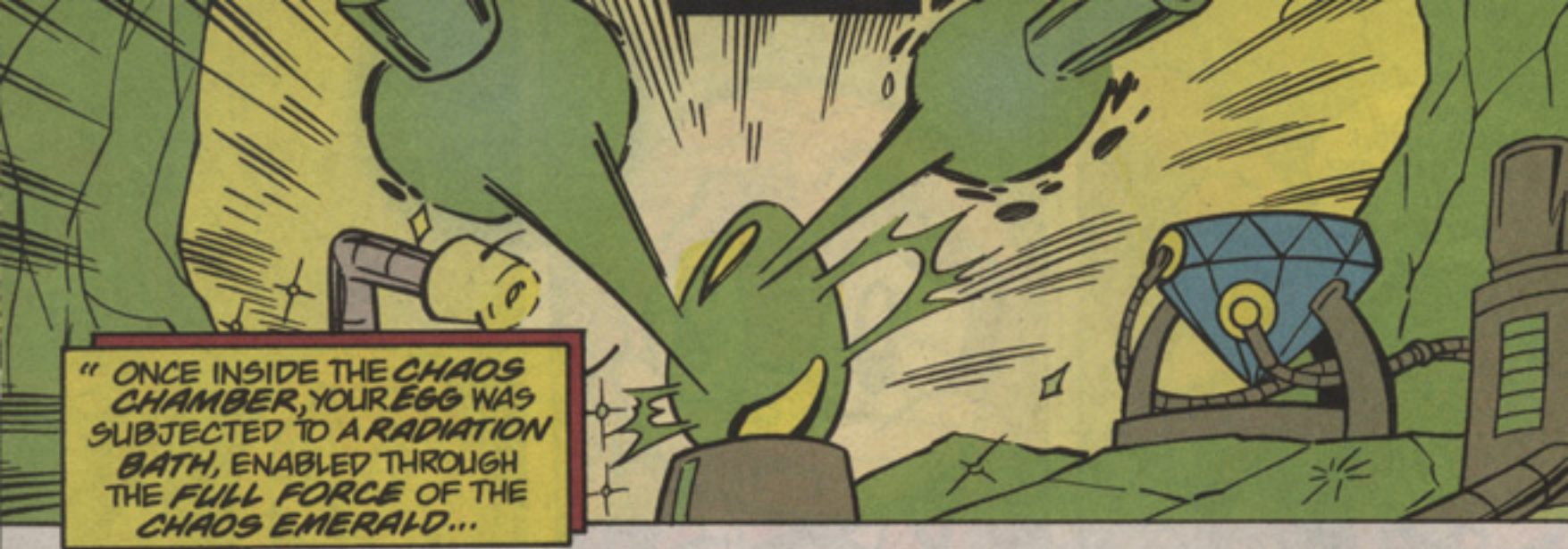
--A FUTURE
THAT MAY YET
CONTAIN A SHRED
OF HOPE IF YOU
PREPARE FOR
IT!



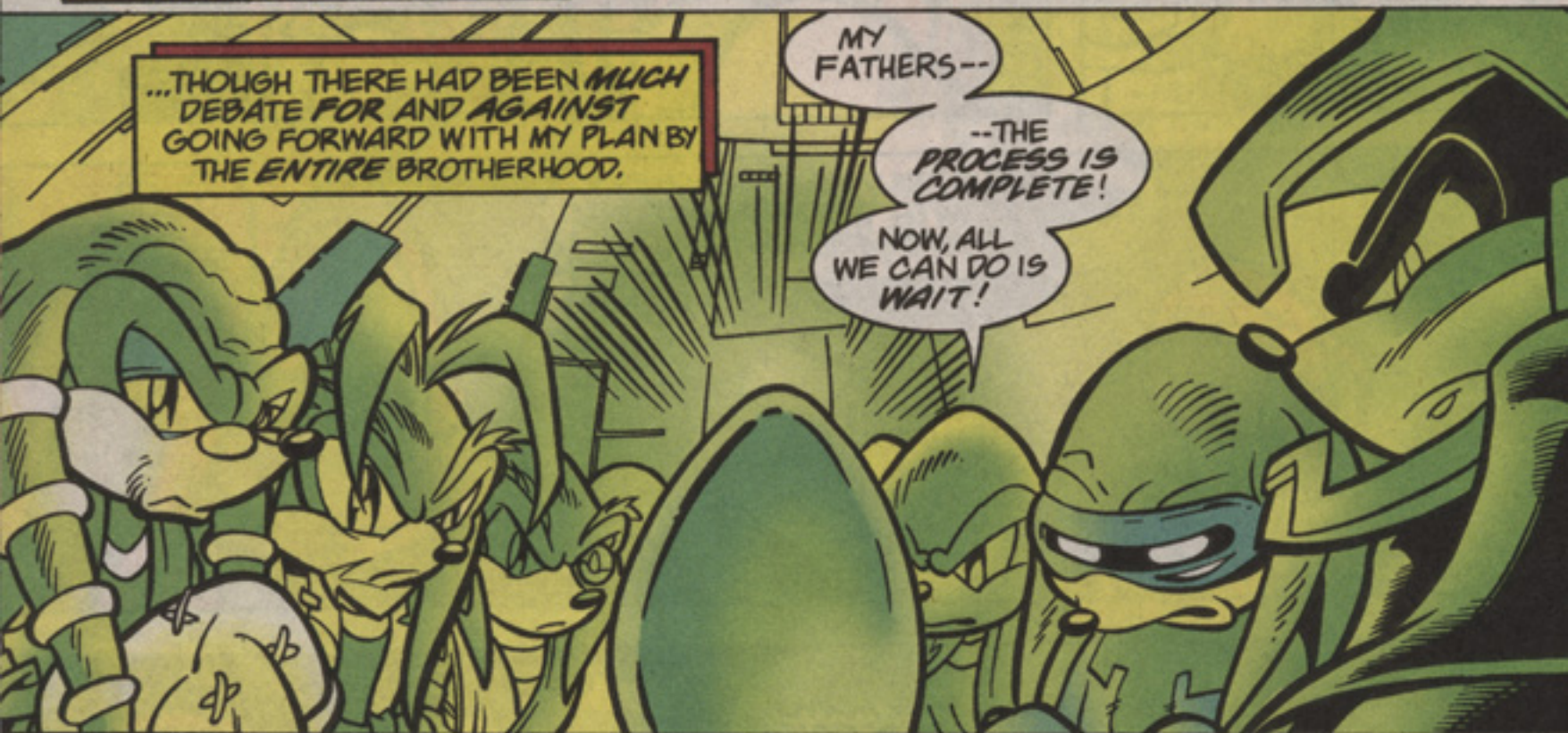
AND HOW
AM I TO GO
ABOUT MY TASK,
GRANDFATHER?







"ONCE INSIDE THE **CHAOS CHAMBER**, YOUR EGG WAS SUBJECTED TO A **RADIATION BATH**, ENABLED THROUGH THE **FULL FORCE** OF THE **CHAOS EMERALD**...



...THOUGH THERE HAD BEEN MUCH DEBATE FOR AND AGAINST GOING FORWARD WITH MY PLAN BY THE **ENTIRE BROTHERHOOD**.

MY FATHERS---

--THE **PROCESS IS COMPLETE!**

NOW, ALL WE CAN DO IS **WAIT!**



"WITH MUCH **ANTICIPATION**, YOUR MOTHER AND I WATCHED AS YOU **HATCHED**...

"...AND WHEN YOU **EMERGED**, I KNEW THEN ALL MY EFFORTS HAD MET WITH **SUCCESS**..."

LOCKE?



SO WHAT WAS IT
THAT SAID EVERYTHING
WAS A-OKAY?

SEE MY
GLOVES?

YEAH?
WHAT ABOUT
'EM?



OBSERVE!

EVEN THOUGH
I'M A GUARDIAN,
I'M ALSO STILL FULLY
ECHIDNA!

YOU, ON
THE OTHER
HAND--

--ARE EVERY BIT
THE GENETICALLY
ENHANCED MUTANT
OFFSPRING YOU
WERE INTENDED
TO BE!

IT'S
TRUE!

ALL THIS
TIME--

--I THOUGHT
EVERY GUARDIAN
HAD KNUCKLES
LIKE MINE!

BUT, WHY
ME?!!

THOUGH
THE
BROTHERHOOD
CANNOT
FIGHT THE
FUTURE--

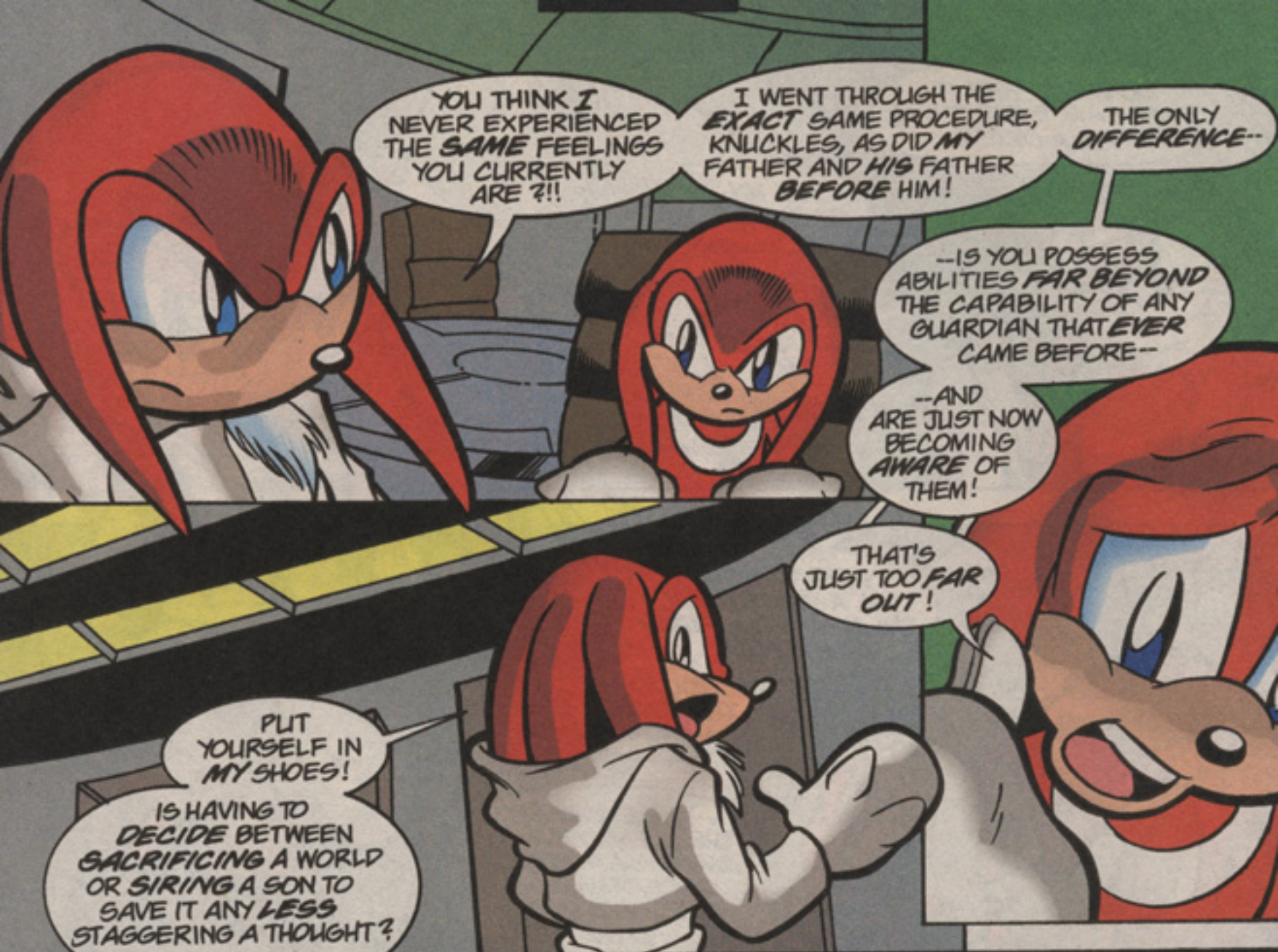


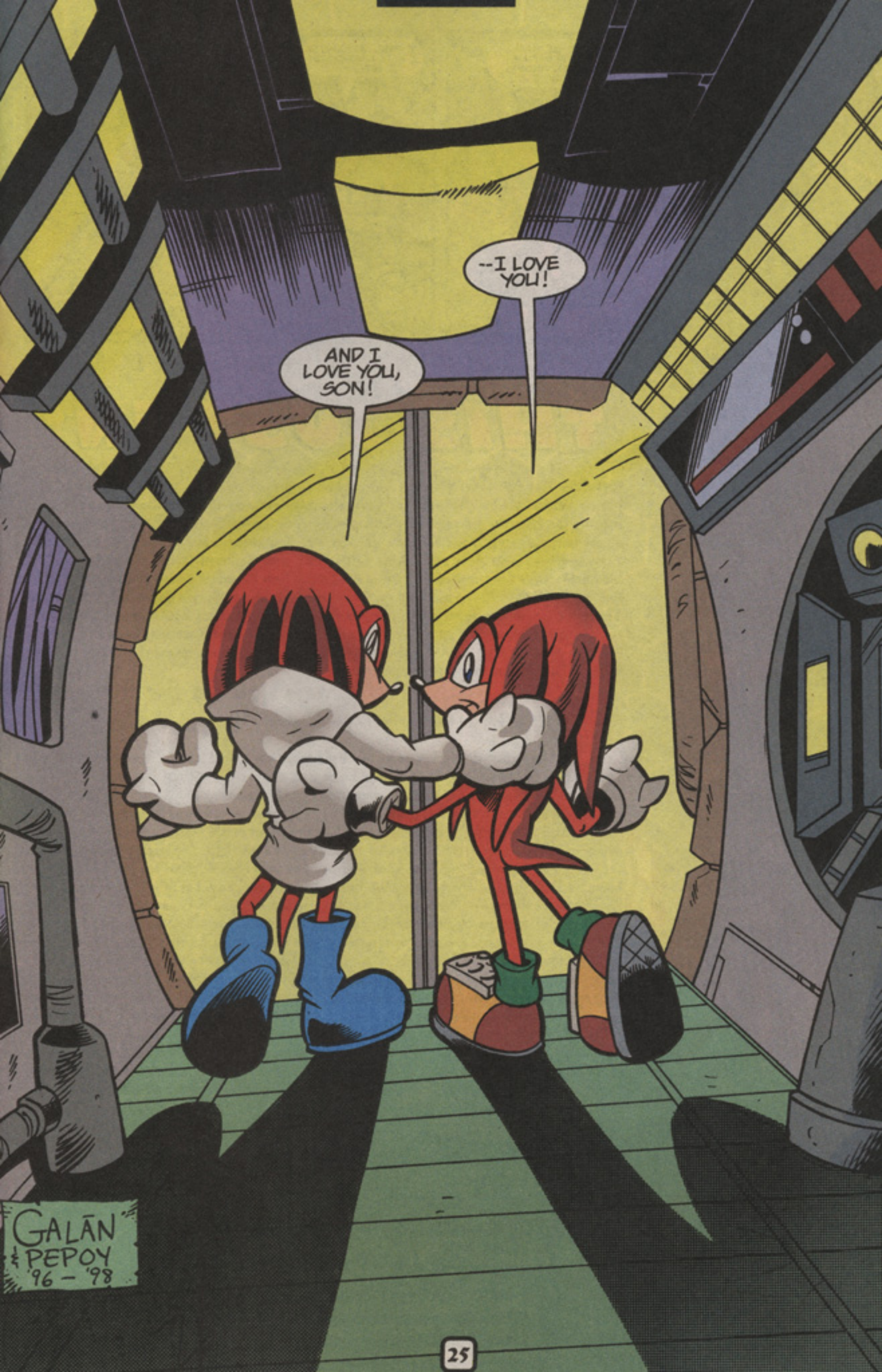
--YOU CAN
CREATE ITS
SAVIOR!



SAVIOR?!!
ME?!!!

DID IT EVER OCCUR TO
YOU I'D BE HAPPIER JUST
BEING YOUR SON?!!





AND I
LOVE YOU,
SON!

--I LOVE
YOU!

GALAN
PEPOY
96 - '98

FISTFUL

OF



OFF PANEL



by Gallagher & Manak

THIS JUST IN!

Hey, Knux-fans! Thanks for being a part of this very special issue of Knuckles The Echidna. It's been a long road to get to this point. It could not have happened without you. Because of you, the fans, supporting his book month after month for twenty-five months straight, you've allowed our favorite guardian the opportunity to live. Together, we've watched Knuckles grow and evolve in his new surroundings and new situations with poise and determination. And chronicling his adventures for most of his run are creators Ken Penders, Manny Galan, Andrew Pepoy, Vickie Williams and Barry Grossman. I'd like to thank them, as well as Jane Thompson and her new assistant Mari Schaal from Sega of America. On a sour note, this issue does not sport a silver-inked cover as mentioned last issue due to production complications. We apologize for this but hope you enjoy the cover just the same. That's it for now until next month...

Catch you on the flip side!

And now a few words from artist Manny Galan:

As most of you must know by now, this is my last full issue of Knuckles and I just want to say that it has been one wild ride. When I started drawing Knuckles 2 1/2 years ago, I never dreamed I'd still be doing it today, much less having a blast doing so. But sadly there comes a time when one must move on creatively and explore different venues and draw upon other sources for inspiration in order to grow as an artist. It was my intention to stay with the book indefinitely but recently I've been feeling devoid of inspiration and rather than let the book suffer, have decided to take a much needed break. But never fear, I will not be far away as I will still be doing the back up stories for the foreseeable future and will be taking over for the extremely talented Spaz on cover duty. I would like to thank Archie Comics for giving me a home when there was none to be found: Justin Gabrie, who aside from being a great friend, allowed me the opportunity to grow into the characters and encouraged me to experiment with different forms of storytelling and most importantly, thanks to you, the fans of the book who supported it through all of my nonsense and came back for more every month. To everyone who sent me fan mail, I want you to know it touched me very deeply and it helped me get through the rough times. Thanks for all the kind words and all the support. Don't think of this so much as a good-bye but rather as a see you later.

Love and best wishes,
Manny Galan

J.F. GABRIE
Editor / Art Director

Send letters to:

FISTFUL OF LETTERS #25

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